The gap between supply and consumption is bridged by way of export and import of steel, depending upon net demand and surplus/deficit in domestic availability.

(c) As per the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) document, the estimated production of crude steel in the country is likely to be around 80 million tonnes by the end of Plan period *i.e.* by 2011-12.

(d) to (f) Indian steel sector is de-regulated and Government is not directly involved in production of steel. However, Government is acting as a facilitator through its various policy initiatives towards growth and sustainability of steel sector in the country. The public sector steel units namely Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) and National Mineral Development Corporation Limited (NMDC) have undertaken capacity expansion, modernization and Greenfield projects. SAIL has undertaken capacity expansion and modernization of its plants to augment its crude steel production capacity to nearly 25 million tonnes. Similarly, RINL is also expanding its capacity to 6.3 million tonnes. NMDC Limited is setting up a 3.0 million tonnes capacity Integrated Steel Plant in Chhattisgarh.

In Orissa, SAIL has undertaken modernization and expansion of its Rourkela Steel Plant to increase hot metal production capacity from 2.12 million tonnes to 4.5 million tonnes.

New payscales for workers in refectiories

†103. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:
SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:
Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether workers in refectories factories under the Steel Ministry are being given new pay scales;

(b) if so, since when; and

(c) if not, the conditions on fulfillment of which the same will be given?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI JITIN PRASADA): (a) to (e) It has been decided that the employees of Bharat Refractories Limited (BRL) would be absorbed in Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) on equivalent scales of pay after the company's ongoing merger process with SAIL is completed.

Import of steel

104. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has become a net importer of steel over the last few years;

(b) the figures of import of steel during the last three years;

(c) the impact of domestic steel prices on the consumers in view of the economic recession globally; and

(d) by when the price fluctuations would be stabilized?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI JITIN PRASADA): (a) Yes, Sir. India has become a net importer of steel in 2007-08 and this trend continues in 2008-09.

(b) The table below shows import of total finished steel in the country during the last three years and in the current year.

Year	Import of Total Finished Steel (mt)
2005-06	4.31
2006-07	4.93
2007-08	7.03
April-Dec. 2008-09 *	4.50

SOURCE: Joint Plant Committee; * = provisional

(c) The steel consuming sector of the Indian economy has been adversely affected by the meltdown in the global economy and therefore in line with the price trends in the international market, the domestic steel prices have also shown a declining trend since October, 2008.

(d) The prices of commodities like steel are expected to stabilize, once the impact of economic stimulus packages unveiled by various countries, including India, are realized and economic activities like construction and manufacturing pick up.

Shortage of water for agriculture

105. SARDAR TARLOCHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the water level in Punjab and Haryana and how much it is receding every year? Give the figure of last three years;

(b) the steps being taken in this regard; and

(c) how much is the shortage of water for agriculture in both the States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) The ground water level is being monitored by Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) - an organisation of Ministry of Water Resources. The position of water level and declining trend of water level as per the CGWB during the last three years in the State of Punjab and Haryana are:-

Punjab - The depth of water level lies between 0.85 metre below ground level (m bgl) in Muktsar and 31.32 m bgl in Fatehgarh districts during pre-monsoon (May) and during post-monsoon (November) varies from 0.84 m bgl in Muktsar district to 37.36 m bgl in Ludhiana districts. Very shallow water levels, < 2 m bgl *i.e.* water logging conditions are observed in parts of Ferozpur, Muktsar and in small patches in Gurdaspur and Rupnagar districts. Very deep water levels (>20 m) are observed in parts of Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Moga, Patiala, Sangrur, Nawanshahar and Amritsar districts.